



THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF CAMEROON

An officially bilingual country, the Cameroonian educational system reflects both its French and British roots:

ANGLOPHONE SYSTEM *Academic year: mid-September to June*

Education level	Years of study/age	Certificate/Exam/Degree	U.S. equivalent
Primary School	6 years/ages 6–12	First School Leaving Certificate	N/A
Lower General Secondary School (MS/HS)	5 years/ages 12–17	GCE O-level exam and certificate	N/A
Upper General Secondary School (HS+)	2 years/ages 17–19	GCE A-level exam and certificate	HS diploma
University (undergrad)	3 years	Bachelor's degree	Same
University (grad)	1+ years, depends on subj.	Master's, Doctorate, MD, etc.	Same

After completing their primary education, students may pursue a general or technical track in secondary school. Those pursuing the general track are most likely to study in the U.S. Students are permitted to take a maximum of 11 courses when pursuing their General Certificate of Education Ordinary levels (GCE O-levels), and must pass a minimum of 4 subjects in order to receive a certificate. Please note that the Cameroonian government does not count Religion towards this passing number. Grades of A–C are passing, and grades E and F are considered failing; a grade of “U” stands for “unclassified,” and is essentially below a fail. In some cases, students will apply to community college in the U.S. upon passing their O-levels.

Upon successful completion of their GCE O-levels, students may continue studying for their GCE Advanced levels (A-levels). The Cameroonian A-level course of study is consistent with British A-levels with respect to the degree of difficulty. Students may take A-levels in the following subject areas: Biology, Chemistry, Economics, English Language, French, Geography, History, Pure Mathematics with Mechanics, Pure Mathematics with Statistics, Further Mathematics, Physics, Philosophy and Religious Studies. Students take a maximum of 5 subjects, and must pass a minimum of 2 subjects (excluding Religious Studies) in order to receive their A-level certificate and to enter university in Cameroon. To assess the strength of the student, take into account the grades earned and the number of subjects attempted. The grading system is as follows:

GCE A-level score	Approximate U.S. grading equivalent
A	A+ (pass)
B	A (pass)
C	B (pass)
D	C (pass)
E	C- (pass)
O	Similar to a D; compensated, but not passed; passed subject at O level
F	Fail

Students take their O-level and A-level exams in June; results are released in August. To verify the authenticity of a student's results, please call the GCE Board directly at +237 3332–2114 or +237 7761–5664. The GCE Board also has combination phone/fax numbers: +237 7799–1196, +237 3332–2114, and +237 3332–2112.

FRANCOPHONE SYSTEM *Academic year: mid-September to June*

Education level	Years of study/age	Certificate/exam/degree	U.S. equivalent
<i>Ecole Primaire</i>	6 years/ages 6–12	CEP	N/A
<i>Collège</i> (MS/HS)	4 years/ages 12–16	BEPC	N/A
<i>Lycée</i> (HS +)	3 years/ages 16–19	<i>Probatoire</i> (pre-Bac exam), then <i>Baccalauréat</i>	HS diploma +
University (undergrad)	3 years	<i>Licence</i>	≈ Bachelor's degree; can apply to Master's programs
University (grad)	1+ years after <i>Licence</i> , depends on subject	<i>Maîtrise</i> (research/paper, only best students)	4 th yr. uni/1 st yr. grad school; some schools credit as Master's degree; can apply to Master's programs
University (grad)	1 year after <i>Maîtrise</i>	<i>DEA</i> or <i>DESS</i>	≈ Master's degree/beginning of PhD
University (grad)	4+ years after <i>Maîtrise</i> , depends on subject	<i>Doctorat</i> , PhD, etc.	Terminal degrees in a field

Note: Cameroon has adopted the Bologna Accord's Bachelor's-Masters-Doctorate (3–5–8 years) model; the Maîtrise, etc. will eventually disappear.

After completing their primary education, students may continue their studies in a general or technical track in secondary school. Those pursuing the general track are most likely to study in the U.S. The Cameroonian *baccalauréat* is consistent with the French *baccalauréat* with respect to the degree of difficulty. For the Cameroonian *baccalauréat*, students choose a *série* (subject area) to study.

Série Subjects

A4	Philosophy and Letters
B	Economics and Social Sciences
C	Mathematics and Physics

Série Subjects

D	Mathematics and Natural Sciences
E	Mathematics and Technology (relatively new course of study)

Note: All série include the study of English and math.

In a *série*, 3–4 courses are taken as part of the *premier groupe*, and 3 courses are taken as part of the *deuxième groupe*. Each course is assigned a coefficient ranging from 2 to 4, with those in the *premier groupe* having higher coefficients. The higher the coefficient, the more difficult the course. Courses are marked on a scale of 0–20; the result is then multiplied by the coefficient assigned to that course for that *série*. An average score is tallied from each *groupe* and used to compile an overall score. A minimum overall score of 10 is needed to pass (individual courses may be passed with a grade lower than 10) and enter university in Cameroon. Students may earn a *mention* for their score.

Score	Mention	Translation	U.S. grade equivalent
16–20	<i>Très bien</i>	Excellent, very good	Extremely rare, top 1% of students
14–15.9	<i>Bien</i>	Good	A+/A
12–13.9	<i>Assez Bien</i>	Good enough	A/A-
10–11.9	<i>Passable</i>	Pass	A- to C
0–9	<i>Echec</i>	Fail	F

Students take the *baccalauréat* in June, and receive a *relevé de notes* that serves as a transcript/diploma in August. To verify the authenticity of a student's results, please call the *Office du Baccalauréat du Cameroun* directly at +237 2230–5566 or +237 2230–5567.

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

In 2006, 108,000 students were enrolled in Cameroonian universities. The yearly rate of growth in student enrollment currently stands at 20 percent. There are 7 state-run institutions: University of Buea, University of Douala, University of Dschang, University of Maroua (opened October 2008), University of Ngaoundéré, University of Yaoundé I, and University of Yaoundé II. With the exception of the University of Buea, these public universities are modeled on the French system and feature open enrollment to all qualified students. Due to overenrollment, entrance into certain disciplines (agriculture, business, engineering, medicine, etc.) exam-based. The University of Buea is modeled on the Anglophone system. All students must apply; admission is not guaranteed. Grading at Buea is based on an A–F scale; the other universities use a 0–20 grading scale. The academic year runs from October to July.

Overcrowding and access issues led, in part, to the establishment of private universities: Bamenda University of Science and Technology, Catholic University of Central Africa, Cosendai Adventist Univesity, Université d'Elat, Université des Montagnes (Highlands University), Protestant University of Central Africa, and Université de Yaoundé Sud. Cameroon Christian University will open in 2 years, and there are plans for a new Catholic university. Even with these private universities, however, problems persist. These include: inadequate funding (in 2006, 11% of the overall education budget was allocated to universities); faculty retention; and a continued high rate of unemployment among graduates. The government is taking small, slow steps to deal with these problems.

CAMEROONIANS IN THE STUDYING IN THE U.S.

In the 2007–2008 academic year, almost 1,900 Cameroonian students were studying in the U.S. at various institutions.

TESTING IN CAMEROON

Students have access to the SAT, ACT, GRE, GMAT, and TOEFL exams. Most of these exams are offered at the American Language Center (ALC) in Yaoundé and the American Language Center in Douala. Test availability depends on the test site. Currently, the ALC in Yaoundé only offers the paper-based TOEFL; the iBT is available in Douala. As of November 2008, the Educational Advising Center does not recommend that students take the iBT at Mercan Capital in Yaoundé due to unacceptable test conditions that skew results for the worse.

Please note that students cannot use a credit card to register for the SAT online, which significantly impedes the registration process. It is both difficult and expensive to draw a bank check in USD for SAT registration fees, and significantly raises the cost of the test.

EDUCATIONAL ADVISING CENTER

The Educational Advising Center (EAC) is sponsored by the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Yaoundé. Through a variety of programming, the Educational Advisor reaches out to students of all ages as they explore their options for study in the U.S. The goal is to guide them in making thoughtful, appropriate choices as they navigate the application process. In turn, universities will have the chance to shape the future leaders of Cameroon. Questions? Concerns? Resources to share? Recruitment plans? Please contact the EAC:

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